

189# H-509B



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: November 27, 1987

In reply refer to: H-87-57

Mr. Robert A. Innocenzi
New Jersey Department of Transportation
1035 Parkway Avenue
Trenton, New Jersey 08618

About 7:34 a.m. on October 9, 1986, two charter intercity tour buses were traveling westbound in the right lane on State Route (SR) 495 in North Bergen, New Jersey, en route to Washington, D.C. As the westbound buses approached the Kennedy Boulevard exit on SR 495, the second bus suddenly veered leftward into the adjacent lane, struck the left rear of a passenger car traveling in that lane, then crossed into the eastbound contraflow lane, and struck a transit bus en route to New York City. One bus passenger aboard the transit bus was fatally injured and 26 other occupants aboard both buses sustained serious to minor injuries. 1/

The buses collided in a construction area where a bridge carrying SR 495 over U.S. Routes 1 and 9 (the North Bergen viaduct) was being rebuilt. Although the construction work was not a causal factor in the accident, the investigation revealed deficiencies in the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) traffic control plan (TCP) for the SR 495 viaduct project. NJDOT's method of using a "third party" (the local aid safety investigators) to check the TCP proved ineffective in identifying deficiencies. For example, the inspectors apparently did not notice that the "STOP" and "YIELD" signs controlled the same traffic entering from the Kennedy Boulevard entrance ramp, nor did they notice that the guide sign was directing traffic to exit at a blocked exit. These investigators also did not notice that the striping was out of alignment by nearly 2 feet.

A local aid safety investigator "inspected" the job while driving in the right lane of SR 495. Obviously, such an inspection cannot be very thorough considering all the items in the TCP and the speed at which the inspection was made (not only in time spent, but the speed at which he was traveling in his automobile). The Safety Board urges the State of New Jersey to implement procedures to verify that safety reviews of traffic control schemes, stage construction plans, proposed detours, and related specifications are thorough and properly conducted.

1/ For more detailed information, read Highway Accident Report--"Multiple Collision with an Intercity Charter Bus, Passenger Car, and Transit Bus, State Route 495, North Bergen, New Jersey, October 9, 1986" (NTSB/HAR-87/06).

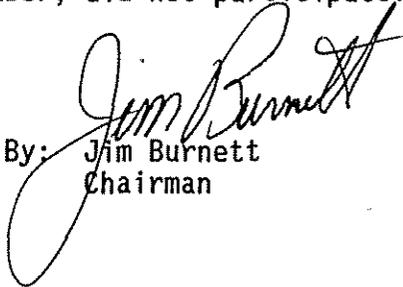
Therefore, as a result of its investigation, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the New Jersey Department of Transportation:

Implement necessary procedures to verify that local aid inspectors and other related personnel effectively review and inspect traffic control plans at construction zones. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-87-57)

Also as a result of its investigation, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations H-87-55 to the E. Vanderhoof and Sons Bus Company and H-87-56 to the DeCamp Bus Lines.

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility ". . . to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any actions taken as a result of its safety recommendations and would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendation H-87-57 in your reply.

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and NALL and KOLSTAD, Members, concurred in this recommendation. LAUBER, Member, did not participate.

By: 
Jim Burnett
Chairman